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INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY 0061
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1467
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TAGS: PREL PBTS PINR ETRD ST VE XL

SUBJECT: ST. LUCIA PM SAYS CARICOM TO BACK VENEZUELA FOR SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT

REF: A. NASSAU 1050

1B. GEORGETOWN 672

1C. WWW.CARICOM.ORG/JSP/PRESSRELEASES/PRES147_06. JSP

Classified By: A/DCM Clyde Howard for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a July 11 call on Ambassador Kramer to discuss possible changes to the St. Lucia Consular Information Sheet (septel), St. Lucia Prime Minister Kenny Anthony said he believed CARICOM Heads of Government (HOGs) had decided to vote as a bloc to support Venezuela over Guatemala for the UN Security Council (UNSC). Anthony admitted, however, that he had to leave the CARICOM HOGs meeting early to continue medical treatment on his leg. For Anthony, the CARICOM decision was anti-Guatemala (because of lingering resentment from the "banana wars") rather than pro-Venezuela. He implied that an alternative U.S.-supported candidate may have been more successful in garnering CARICOM support. Since the HOGs apparently left with different interpretations of the outcome of their meeting, some saying CARICOM as a group will vote for Venezuela and others saying it will be a country-by-country decision (Refs A and B), Post will continue to seek clarification on the Eastern Caribbean states' views on the UNSC seat. End Summary.

12. (C) St. Lucia Prime Minister Kenny Anthony and Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security Calixte George met Ambassador Kramer on July 11 to lobby the U.S. not to change the St. Lucia Consular Information Sheet to reflect rising crime against tourists in that country. Ambassador Kramer took the opportunity to ask Anthony whether or not the CARICOM HOGs, at their July 3-6 meeting in St. Kitts, had decided as a bloc to support Venezuela over Guatemala in the UNSC race. Anthony believed CARICOM heads had decided to support Venezuela as a group, but admitted he had to leave the St. Kitts meeting early to get medical care for his leg. (Note: Anthony also missed the June 21-23 Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) heads meeting to receive medical attention in Cuba, presumably for the same condition. End Note.)

Bad Blood over Bananas

13. (C) Characterizing Guatemala as a "hard sell," Anthony said the Central American country had shown "implacable hostility" in its "exceedingly harsh" treatment of the Caribbean in the banana wars. (Note: PM Anthony refers to the bitter confrontation that ensued when Latin American

countries, supported by the U.S., brought a case to the World Trade Organization in the 1990s challenging the preferential market access for bananas that European countries gave their former colonies, such as St. Lucia. End Note.) He described Guatemala as the "most aggressive" Central American country in the dispute and highlighted that several times Guatemala had refused to meet with banana-exporting countries in the OECS. When Ambassador Kramer raised the negatives of having Venezuela on the UNSC, Anthony simply stated, "The U.S. might have been better off with a different candidate." Minister George added that Guatemala's border dispute with CARICOM-member Belize was also a factor in the decision.

Comment

¶4. (C) Because Anthony was absent from the CARICOM HOGs session at which support for the Latin American/Caribbean UNSC seat was discussed (and apparently had not been briefed in detail), his statement mainly reflects his own country's strong opposition to Guatemala's candidacy. Although he may have his own reservations about Venezuela--unlike its OECS neighbors, St. Lucia has hesitated to implement PetroCaribe--and may share our concerns about its membership on the UNSC, Anthony must be responsive to his home constituency which blames Latin American banana producers such as Guatemala for the near total collapse of St. Lucia's banana industry. Although most press reports strongly suggest that CARICOM reached a consensus to support Venezuela as a bloc, reporting from Embassies Georgetown and Nassau (Refs A and B) and the ambiguous CARICOM HOGs' communique (Ref C) all seem to indicate CARICOM has not/not yet clearly committed to vote as a group for Venezuela. Post will continue to monitor the Eastern Caribbean governments' views on the upcoming UNSC decision.

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